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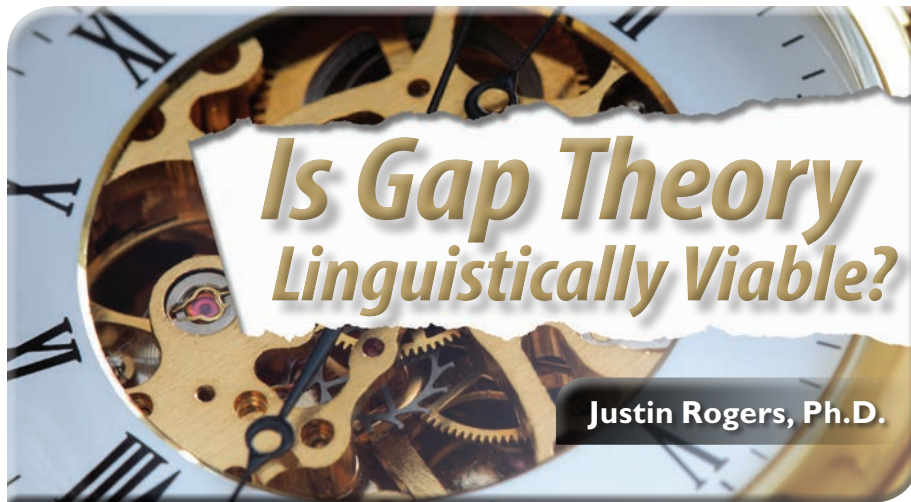
# IS **GAP** THEORY LINGUISTICALLY VIALE?



**AP Weekend Seminars**

***Promising News***  
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*Article In Brief...* 

**Efforts to infuse the Genesis Creation account with vast eons of evolutionary time include assertions about the correct meanings of the Hebrew terms *bara* and *asah* and the insertion of a gap of time between verses 1 and 2 in Genesis chapter 1. However, the arguments offered to support these contentions do not hold up under linguistic scrutiny.**

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**A**t the center of scientific inquiry is a desire to express free thought. “Go wherever your mind leads you” is the academic cry that harkens back at least to the Enlightenment. For Bible believers, however, this mantra has its limits. If one’s pursuit of so-called “knowledge” leads him to deny the divinity of Christ or the existence of God, then he has become a victim of intellectual deceit. The philosophical constructs causing him to reach these conclusions must be reexamined if not rejected. Such is the case with many modern theories of universal origins. By eliminating God as the primal Cause, these theories operate

under false pretenses, and thus can never reach the truth.

Many Christians working in the field of scientific cosmology seek to poach godless theories from modern science and work them into a model of biblical faith. We should applaud their efforts so long as they do not “go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6). Unfortunately, some do go too far. In their desire to harmonize the biblical account with the scientific “necessity” of old-Earth creationism, they seek to read into the Bible concepts not clearly present. Rather than using divine inspiration to inform science, they prefer to impose modern scientific insight onto the Bible—an insight, it should be observed, the original readers of the Bible would not have understood.

#### WHAT IS GAP THEORY?

One example of the harmonistic approach between modern “science”

and biblical faith is the so-called “Gap Theory.” Although there are numerous iterations of this idea, each of them suggests Genesis 1 contains a gap or multiple gaps in which can be squeezed the amount of time necessary to accommodate an Earth billions of years old. Although the biblical text does not require or even intimate such gaps, proponents of Gap Theory insist that the science requires it. In other words, they allow the tail to wag the dog, allowing “science” to trump plain biblical teaching.

Of course, for theists who claim to accept the biblical account of Creation, much is at stake. If Gap Theory is correct, then the Bible **must** be made to accommodate it. Since anyone with common sense and an English Bible would find it difficult to accept Gap Theory from the Genesis account alone, Gap theorists often transfer the debate to the mysterious world of Hebrew linguistics. Playing on the ignorance of the general Bible reader (and often revealing their own), Gap theorists insist the Hebrew terminology makes Gap Theory possible.

I must admit: when I first encountered the arguments from biblical Hebrew to defend Gap Theory, I was confused. Even liberal Bible scholars do not use **linguistic** arguments to deny the literal understanding of Genesis 1. James Barr, a world-renowned Old Testament scholar, writes,

So far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) [*sic*] of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience; (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provide by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to the later stages of the Biblical story, and (c) Noah’s flood

was understood to be worldwide, and to have extinguished all human and land animal life except for those in the ark (as quoted in Platinga, 2001, p. 217).

These reasons explain why critical biblical scholarship tends to discuss the genre of Genesis 1-11, that is, whether it is intended to be history or mythology, whether it is literal or symbolic, whether it contains **any** truth or **some** truth. The meaning of the words themselves, however, is under no major dispute. But Gap theorists maintain the Creation account is both historical and (apparently) incomprehensible (at least, without the “expert” guidance of the Gap theorist). They insist the key to unlocking Genesis 1 is not what it **does** say, but what it **doesn’t** say. What a strange method of interpretation.

### WHAT GAP THEORISTS ALLEGE

**T**HERE are two major linguistic arguments cited in favor of Gap Theory. First, Gap theorists begin by understanding the term *bārā’* in Genesis 1 to mean “create” (from nothing), and *āsāh* to mean “restore” (at a later time). The *bārā’* creation marks the **initial stage** of Creation in which God set the world into motion by **fiat**. One of the earliest Gap theorists, George H. Pember, wrote over 100 years ago: “For we are told that in the beginning God **created** the heaven and the earth; but the Scriptures never affirm that He did this in the six days. The work of those days was...quite a different thing from the original creation: they were times of restoration, and the word *asah* [*sic*] is used in connection with them” (1907, pp. 22-23).

Within churches of Christ, John Clayton has been an active proponent of the insights of Gap Theory, although his actual position defies precise categorization. Thompson refers to it as the “modified Gap Theory,” although Clayton himself

is rather coy about labeling his position (2000, pp. 281-296). Like others, Clayton also appeals to the Hebrew language to defend his version of the theory. Unfortunately, like the Gap theorists, he too states *bārā’* is a miraculous creation from nothing, even going so far as to suggest Genesis 1:1 implies the “Big Bang” (Clayton, 2015, p. 90). Like the Gap theorists, Clayton also parrots the view that *āsāh* means “reworking existing material” (2011, p. 207). If Clayton were to read the rest of the Hebrew Bible, or even the rest of Genesis, he would learn that his definitions are impossible to maintain (as we shall demonstrate).

By interpreting the Hebrew in this fashion, Gap theorists believe they can accommodate an Earth billions of years old without compromising the essential integrity of the Genesis account. The *bārā’* stage of Creation occurs first (Genesis 1:1), and, after centuries or even billions of years, the *āsāh* stage of Creation occurs (the “six days,” Genesis 1:2ff.). Unfortunately, Gap theorists focus their attention, so far as the Hebrew is concerned, principally on Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11 (taken as proof of the *āsāh* stage

of Creation). Again, if they were to read the **entire** Hebrew Bible, however, they would learn their position to be linguistically untenable, as we shall demonstrate.

Second, Gap theorists allege the grammar of Genesis 1:2 implies a gap. Basically, three arguments are made from the Hebrew: (1) The Hebrew *waw* is disjunctive, and thus implies an interruption in the narration from what is reported in Genesis 1:1. This interruption signals a chronological “gap”; (2) The verb form “was” (*hāy’tāh*) should be translated “became,” signaling a new beginning beyond the *bārā’* creation of Genesis 1:1; and (3) The nouns traditionally translated “without form and void” (*tōhū vā-vōhū*) imply a degeneration of the original Creation, and thus what follows is a re-creation.

We shall proceed to discuss and evaluate these Hebrew linguistic arguments, beginning first with the question of *bārā’* and *āsāh*, and then turning to the grammar of Genesis 1:2 specifically. In the course of our analysis, the linguistic evidence for the Gap Theory will be shown to be lacking?

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## THE VOCABULARY OF CREATION

**T**HE Genesis account uses no less than four terms to describe Creation. The terms best known are *bārā* (“create”) and *āsāh* (“make”), although *yātsar* (“form”) and *bānāh* (“build”) are also found. Man is “formed” (*yātsar*) from the dirt (Genesis 2:7-8), and woman is “built” (*bānāh*) from man (Genesis 2:22). The bulk of attention, however, has centered around *bārā* and *āsāh*, the most frequent of these four words in the Creation account. Gap theorists allege these terms refer to very different stages of Creation, billions of years apart. We shall see that, while this theory is attractive at the macro-level, the Hebrew terminology simply will not bear the burden of proof Gap theorists load upon it.

### *bārā* and *āsāh*

We should begin by noting that the Bible uses multiple terms to describe God’s creative activity. Across the Old Testament, in Hebrew and Aramaic, one can locate no less than **13 different terms** for Creation! So Israelite Creation theology is not as simple as making a facile distinction between *bārā* and *āsāh*. In fact, **these terms are used interchangeably of God’s creative activity**.

Even in the Genesis account itself, *bārā* and *āsāh* are used together to summarize God’s creative work: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth **when they were created**” (*bārā*), that is, at the time when (literally, “in the day that”) Yahweh God **made** (*āsāh*) earth and heaven” (Genesis 2:4; translation mine). The careful reader will notice that the second half of this verse explains and completes the first. We have here what literary scholars call a chiasm, in which the sentence can be broken into two or more parts, and the various components of the sentence parallel one another

in introverted fashion (for more on chiasm, see Dorsey, 1999). Allow me to illustrate:

These are the generations of...

a—the heavens and the earth

b—when they were **created**

b’—at the time when Yahweh

**God made**

a’—the earth and the heavens

Notice that the first and final components (a and a’) are flipped, signaling the inverted nature of the verse, and they also highlight the verse’s synonymous parallelism (both halves convey exactly the same idea). Also note the parallelism of b and b’. The whole of the Creation narrative could be described by both Hebrew terms. So the forced distinction made by Gap theorists between *bārā* and *āsāh* is already shown to be artificial in the Genesis account itself. But we can go further.

The terms *bārā* and *āsāh* are routinely used in parallel with one another, both in Genesis and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

- God both “created” (*bārā*) and “made” (*āsāh*) Adam (Genesis 5:1).
- God will destroy man whom He has “created” (*bārā*), along with every living thing, for He was sorry that He had “made” (*āsāh*) them (Genesis 6:7).
- The hand of God “has done” (*āsāh*) it, and God Himself “created” (*bārā*) it (Isaiah 41:20).
- God has “created” (*bārā*) and “made” (*āsāh*) for His glory (Isaiah 43:7).
- God has “made” (*āsāh*) Earth and “created” (*bārā*) man on it (Isaiah 45:12).
- God “made” (*āsāh*) **and** “created” (*bārā*) the Earth (Isaiah 45:18).
- God “creates” (*bārā*) wind and “makes” (*āsāh*) darkness (Amos 4:13).

As any careful reader of the Bible will observe, the Hebrew language does

**not** make a sharp distinction between *bārā* and *āsāh* in accounts depicting the Creation. On the contrary, the terms are used interchangeably for Creation throughout the Old Testament, and can often be found in parallel expressions.

Now, this does not mean that *bārā* and *āsāh* are always synonymous terms. The word *bārā* occurs 53 times in the Bible, and generally has to do with an initial act, or a new beginning. For example, God “creates something new” at the punishment of Korah and his company (Numbers 16:30). He “makes a new beginning” of Israel after the Babylonian Exile (Isaiah 41:20). The term represents a change—a new beginning—in the natural order as well (Isaiah 65:15; Jeremiah 31:22).

So, in addition to creation, which is always an “initial act” on God’s part, subsequent divine intervention **after** creation can also be depicted by the word *bārā*. This explains why the term can be used of the creation of man. He was a new creature, a new beginning, in the process. If Gap theorists were correct, any usage of *bārā* after the **initial** Genesis Creation would be inappropriate. This clearly is not the case.

The term *āsāh*, by comparison, has a much broader semantic range. This term occurs 2,627 times, making it one of the most common verbs in the Bible. In addition to meaning “make,” *āsāh* is the standard verb for “do, act, or perform” in Hebrew. It often means to “keep” the Law (Deuteronomy 5:32), to manufacture a product (1 Samuel 8:12), to “carve” (Ezekiel 41:18), to “work” miracles (Deuteronomy 34:11), to “make” money in the colloquial English sense (Deuteronomy 8:17), to “make” a name for oneself (Genesis 11:4), to “make” dinner or a meal (Judges 6:19), to “make” peace (Isaiah 27:5), to “work” a job (Ruth 2:19), and

Hebrew Term	Select Scriptural Passage(s)	English Translation
ברא / <i>bārā'</i>	Deuteronomy 4:32; Malachi 2:10	“created”
עשה / <i>‘āsāh</i>	2 Kings 19:15; Jeremiah 32:17	“made”
יצר / <i>yātsar</i>	Isaiah 43:7; 45:18	“formed”
פעל / <i>pā‘al</i>	Exodus 15:17; Proverbs 16:4	“made”
שם / <i>sīm</i>	Exodus 4:11; Proverbs 8:29	“fixed, appointed”
כון / <i>kūn</i>	Isaiah 45:18; Jeremiah 10:12	“established”
יסד / <i>yāsad</i>	Psalms 24:2; Proverbs 3:19	“founded”
בנה / <i>bānāh</i>	Genesis 2:22; Amos 9:6	“built”
ילד / <i>yālad</i>	Deuteronomy 32:18; Job 38:29	“begat”
חול / <i>chūl</i>	Job 15:7; Psalm 90:2	“brought forth”
נטה / <i>nātāh</i>	Job 9:8; Isaiah 42:5	“stretched out” (heavens)
קנה / <i>qānāh</i>	Deuteronomy 32:6; Psalm 139:13	“formed” (literally “bought”)
עבד / <i>‘āvad</i>	Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 6:28 (Aramaic)	“made”

### Hebrew Terms Used for Creation

many other possible nuances. In short, many of the same meanings we can assign to the English verbs “make,” “do,” “work,” “perform,” “act,” and the like can also be ascribed to the Hebrew *‘āsāh*.

The word *‘āsāh* basically has to do with producing something through work, and it may or may not imply pre-existing material. Passages echoing Genesis 1:1 routinely use *‘āsāh* instead of *bārā'* (e.g., 1 Chronicles 16:26; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 45:12). This fact implies that, while these two terms can be used interchangeably of Creation, one emphasizes the production of a **new thing** (whether at Creation or afterward), and the other refers to the work involved in **producing** a thing (whether at Creation or afterward).

### The Vocabulary of Creation in the Hebrew Bible

The Creation is one of the most commonly discussed biblical accounts in later biblical literature. The poetry of the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms and Isaiah 40-55, is rich in Creation terminology. God has a claim on the lives of his people (and on the world!) **because** He is the Creator of everything. It thus makes sense that the Hebrew language would feature many terms to express one of its most basic theological principles.

The biblical terms for Creation are represented in the chart above. As one can observe, the terminology of Creation in the Bible is rich and varied. Many of these terms are used in parallel to one another, indicating their synonymous nature insofar as Creation is concerned. These terms also illustrate that the Israelites

viewed God’s Creation holistically. God “brought creation into initial existence.” God “formed creation.” God “begat” Creation (in a figurative sense). God “established,” “founded,” “acquired,” “spread out,” and “made” every created thing. The full lexicon of Hebrew manufacturing is applied to Creation to illustrate that, in a single period of time, God set the world into existence, just as in a single moment He will destroy it (2 Peter 3:10).

### THE GRAMMAR OF GENESIS 1:2

**We** PREVIOUSLY mentioned that Gap theorists cite three grammatical Hebrew features in favor of their position. They claim: (1) the Hebrew *waw* implies a gap in the narrative; (2) the verb form “was” (*hāy’tāh*) signals a new beginning; and (3) the nouns *tōhū vā-vōhū* imply a

(cont. on p. 140)



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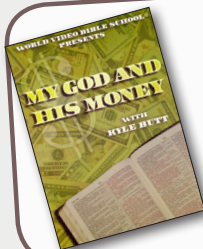
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- The Origin of Design
- The Origin of Morality
- The Origin of the Bible

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re-creation from a degraded, earlier Creation. We shall treat each of these arguments in order.

### The Hebrew Particle *waw*

First, the Hebrew letter *waw*, represented by the incessant “and” in the King James Version and often left untranslated in more recent versions, is always prefixed to Hebrew words. When it is attached to a shortened “imperfect” verb form in biblical narrative, it normally functions as a preterite (from Latin *praeter*, “before”). The purpose is to relate action, typically in the past, and the *waw* functions to connect those past actions to one another.

When the *waw* is attached to a noun, as it is in Genesis 1:2, it is disjunctive, and thus signals a shift in the narrative. This shift does not necessarily imply a different series of events, much less events separated by billions of years in time. An abrupt shift is found in Genesis 3:1—“Now, as for the serpent, he was more crafty.” Although no serpent has been discussed, and the context determines a complete break in the narrative, there is nothing stated about the amount of time that elapsed from the creation of woman and the appearance of the serpent.

Sometimes, however, the disjunctive *waw* can simply provide background information for the story being related (e.g., Genesis 13:13), or explain what is happening simultaneous with the narrative, but elsewhere in location (e.g., Genesis 37:36, translated well as “meanwhile” in the ESV). **In these cases, the *waw* sets up a parenthetical remark which functions to explain the preceding information.** This is, I believe, what we have in Genesis 1:2.

Remember that Genesis 1:1 is a declarative statement: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and **the earth.**” Since the narrative will not focus on the creation of the heavens, but on the Earth, the next verse

opens with the final word from the previous one (*hā’ārets*). By utilizing the disjunctive *waw* along with the noun “Earth,” the Hebrew serves to focus attention on the creation of the Earth: “Now, **as for the earth**, it was formless and void.” This statement is clearly based on the final word of the previous verse as the narrative unpacks exactly how the creation of the Earth took place.

### The Hebrew Word “was” (*hāy’tāh*)

The second linguistic argument from Genesis 1:2 deals with the term *hāy’tāh*, traditionally translated “was.” Gap theorists insist the term means “became” or “had become.” They assert the *bārā’* stage of Creation “became” or “had become” a desolate waste, and thus a re-creation (the *āsāh* stage) was necessary. In the assessment of Fields, “It is the mistranslation of this word which has, perhaps, added more to the ranks of gap theorists than any one factor” (1976, p. 88).

First of all, let us acknowledge that Gap theorists are correct about the Hebrew verb *hāyāh*. It can mean “became” or “had become.” But the meaning of any word must be determined by its context, and not by the translator’s arbitrary choosing of a meaning from a lexical list. In Genesis 1:2, the copular usage of the verb *hāyāh* in biblical Hebrew must be understood. The community of Hebrew grammarians is uniform in recognizing that the term *hāy’tāh* (a feminine form of *hāyāh*) in Genesis 1:2 functions as a copula (see, e.g., Joüon and Muraoka, 2006, §154m), and thus simply links the subject with the object without implying any true verbal quality. Let us explain.

Hebrew has no proper equivalent to the English verb “to be.” Therefore, several syntactical approximations, called copulas, communicate the essence of the English “to be.” For example, the pronouns *hū’* (literally “he” or “it” for masculine objects) and

*hi’* (literally “she” or “it” for feminine objects) can serve this purpose (often translated “is”). The same is true of the verb “he became” (*hāyāh*). The copula *hāy’tāh* is not, therefore, functioning in Genesis 1:2 in its true verbal sense as “became,” but in the copular sense as “was.”

It is recognized universally that “the Hebrew verb translated **was** refers to the time when God began his work of creation. **Was** does not mean that the earth remained in this shapeless state for a long time; nor does it mean that it became such after being something else earlier” (Reyburn and Fry, 1997, p. 30). This point is recognized in virtually every decent translation of the Hebrew text since the Septuagint (cf. the Latin Vulgate and the mountain of English translations). Gap theorists must find a different justification for their theory.

### The Words *tōhū vā-vōhū*

The two Hebrew nouns *tōhū* and *bōhū* are so closely linked that Hebraists universally regard them as a hendiadys (even the Masoretic accentuation suggests this). Some English translations follow this understanding, using an adjective-noun construction (e.g., the NAB: “formless wasteland”). Traditionally, however, two adjectives are used to translate *tōhū vā-vōhū*. The Septuagint has “invisible and unconstructed” (*aoratos kai akataskeuastos*). The Vulgate understands the terms by the synonyms, “empty and void” (*inanis et vacua*). English translations have generally opted for “formless and void.” All of these are legitimate potential translations of a difficult Hebrew expression.

By contrast, Gap theorists assert these terms imply a depreciation of the original Creation (e.g., Isaiah 34:11; Jeremiah 4:23). Since prophetic passages convey a change from order to disorder when the terms are used, Gap theorists believe the same meaning



must hold in Genesis 1:2. [NOTE: Their interpretation here is contingent upon this erroneous understanding of *hāy'tāh*.] However, the prophetic pronouncement is intended to be shocking. God plans to punish his people by dramatically reducing the land to a state of non-existence. It is not merely that He wishes to degrade their existence; He wishes to nullify it!

The term *bōhū* occurs only three times in the Bible, all in conjunction with *tōhū* (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 34:11; Jeremiah 4:23). There can be no doubt, then, that *tōhū* is the clearer term, occurring about 20 times. It can be used in a physical sense in reference to a desert (Deuteronomy 32:10) or an abandoned city (Isaiah 24:10), or it can be used in a moral sense to refer to vanities (1 Samuel 12:21; Isaiah 40:17). It can refer to a “wasteland,” but does not refer to a “wasted land.”

One verse helps us to establish the appropriate meaning of *tōhū* in a Creation context: “For thus says Yahweh, who created [*bārā'*] the heavens—he is God—who formed [*yātsar*] the earth, and he made it [*āsāh*], he established [*kūn*] it not to be empty [*tōhū*]. He created it [*bārā'*] to be inhabited. I am Yahweh, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:18). This verse not only utilizes the term *tōhū* in reference to what the Earth was **not** intended to be, but also associates the *bārā'* Creation with the inhabiting of the Earth.

While the Gap theorists are correct to understand *tōhū vā-vōhū* to mean a state of creation God did not regard as ideal, nothing in the Hebrew words themselves implies a depreciation of Creation. Rather, the expression conveys the amorphous nature of the Earth before God provided His creative structure to it. Such is the way the terms have been understood throughout the history of Bible translation.

## CONCLUSION

**T**HERE is nothing in the Hebrew text of Genesis 1 to demand a gap of time. The Hebrews in fact had a variety of ways to express chronological gaps, whether general or specific. For general amounts of time they could and often did say, “after this” (*ach'rēy-kēn*) or “after these things” (*ach'rēy-hadd'varīm hā-ēleh*). To express a greater extent of time, they could have said “many days” (*yāmīm rābbīm*) or something similar. Although common in the Bible, **none of these phrases occurs in Genesis 1**. So we are left to trust the Gap theorists that they are qualified to speak where the Bible is silent, and to understand in the Hebrew what no Hebrew scholars actually affirm, and what no qualified translators have ever put forth. So is Gap Theory linguistically viable? No.

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## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

### Kyle Butt

Dec 6	Jacksonville, AL	(256) 435-9356
Dec 16	Trinity, AL	(256) 974-7009

### Eric Lyons

December 27	Wetumpka, AL	(334) 567-6561
December 28-29	Huntsville, AL	(256) 533-1953

### Dave Miller

December 5	Leoma, TN	(931) 852-4181
December 16	Tuscaloosa, AL	(205) 339-6211

### Jeff Miller

December 3,10	Montgomery, AL	(334) 272-8558
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## Promising News for the Unborn

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

Article In Brief... 

**While the process of embryonic stem cell research results in the death of unborn human babies, a recent discovery by scientists promises to all but eliminate the “need” for embryonic stem cell research by using induced pluripotent stem cells.**

**S**INCE the infamous Supreme Court decision in 1973, murderous hands have reached into the wombs of willing mothers—designed to be a safe haven for the innocent—and butchered millions upon millions of precious babies. Many are the excuses given to justify such barbaric practices. One of those reasons is “research.” A recent scientific breakthrough may bring salvation for many of those innocent souls yet to be carelessly tossed aside.

Due to President Obama’s March 2009 executive order, restrictions on embryonic stem (ES) cell research that President George W. Bush had signed into effect were lifted. The order allows federal funds to be used for ES cells from “donated surplus embryos originally made for reproduction” (Hyun, 2014, p. 28). So, living embryos that were not used during *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) procedures can be used for ES cell research. *In vitro* fertilization is a procedure in which a woman’s

ovaries are stimulated to generate several eggs, which are sucked from the ovaries and put into a sperm bath in a Petri dish for a few days. Selected embryos are then implanted by catheter into the uterus. The process has been used successfully for decades, with over 200,000 IVF babies being born since 1981 (Nivin, 2015).

From a biblical standpoint, is there anything wrong with this procedure? There are various issues with IVF from a Christian perspective, but one significant problem is the death of many fertilized eggs—i.e., babies—whether intentionally or unintentionally. According to the Bible, the life of a human begins at conception (cf. Jeremiah 1:4-5; Isaiah 49:1; Miller, 2006, p. 36ff.), making IVF essentially premeditated murder. In IVF, only selected embryos are implanted into a woman. The rest are discarded or frozen (typically, eventually to be discarded). Of those that are implanted, most miscarry. Transabdominal selective

reduction is further utilized in the process to wipe out those implanted zygotes that are deemed “inferior.” [NOTE: Transabdominal selective reduction is a procedure in which the number of fetuses present in a uterus are reduced (through abortion), typically by inserting a needle through the mother’s stomach, into the uterus, and then into the desired fetus, injecting a potassium chloride solution into the baby, which burns and poisons it, ultimately stopping its heart (Healthwise Staff, 2014). Fetuses chosen for survival are selected on the basis of gender and health status (“Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction,” 2013).]

ES cell researchers step in at this point. In ES cell research, the goal is to grow cells that can be used for various purposes. Researchers hope to use those cells to learn about the human body and growth patterns and, especially, for harvesting cells that can be transplanted into individuals with various physical conditions (e.g., macular degeneration, leukemia, spinal cord injuries, etc.). Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) is typically used in ES cell research—the process used to clone the famous sheep, Dolly. In SCNT, the nucleus is removed from an egg and the nucleus from a skin cell is transferred into the egg. The egg recognizes that it has been fertilized and begins growing like a normal embryo. The embryo is subsequently destroyed to harvest its cells for the generation of ES cell lines.

You might ask, “Why not use adult stem cells instead of embryos?” The reason is that cells differentiate as they grow—i.e., change into cells with specific functions. For example, a cell will differentiate from a naïve embryonic state during development to acquire the unique characteristics of, say, a bone or liver cell. For many medical purposes, however, researchers need undifferentiated



cells without those cell-type specific programs. So, ES cells are used. Scientists could not figure out how to reprogram a differentiated cell back to an undifferentiated state until 2006. Elizabeth Landau, a science reporter for *CNN*, explained that

[t]he first developments in the field of stem cell research used leftover embryos created by the union of sperm and egg from *in vitro* fertilization. But embryonic stem cell research is controversial because to use the stem cells for developing medical treatments, the embryo is destroyed. Embryos have the potential to develop into a fully formed human [NOTE: Christians would argue that they are **already** fully humans—JM], bringing up ethical questions. Scientists later realized that it's not necessary to use embryos to obtain stem cells that match patients. Shinya Yamanaka won the 2012 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for discovering how to make "induced pluripotent stem cells," or [iPS] cells (2014).

And that brings us to the good news.

Shinya Yamanaka and Sir John Gurdon received the Nobel Prize in October 2012, when Yamanaka's lab discovered that "mature cells can be reprogrammed to become pluripotent"—i.e., they figured out how to reprogram cells by defined factors after they had already specialized ("Shinya Yamanaka—Facts," 2014). By doing so, they made iPS cells, pluripotency being that characteristic of "stemness" that is required for medical purposes. They discovered how to reprogram almost any kind of cell by inserting genes into "mature cells that already have specific functions," turning back the clock on those mature cells (Landau). First, Takahashi and Yamanaka succeeded in reprogramming cells back to an undifferentiated state using differentiated, embryonic fibroblasts in mice (2006). Subsequently, Yu, et al. (2007)

successfully applied the process to differentiated, embryonic fibroblasts in humans, while Takahashi, et al. (2007) successfully applied the process to adult human somatic cells, rather than embryonic cells.

This groundbreaking research promises to eliminate the need for cloning embryos for ES cell purposes. Deiter Egli, senior research fellow at the New York Stem Cell Foundation, explains that "[t]he cloning method takes a few weeks, and is not significantly faster than generating [iPS] cells" (as quoted in Landau). So, time is not a factor in the process. In fact, Egli notes that nuclear transfer advantages "would have to be considerable to beat out [iPS], which is 'much more efficient and less ethically contentious'" (Landau).

Gretchen Vogel, writing in *Science* magazine, highlighted in 2014 that several states have banned human SCNT research. She explained: "The political energy needed to overturn those laws might be hard to generate given that there's now an embryo-free alternative to producing patient-specific stem cells" (p. 462). And that is good news. How can anyone justify destroying embryonic human life when he can get the human cells he needs without embryos? Thank God for Yamanaka and Gurdon, whose research may help repair the breaching dam holding back the proverbial river of American baby blood shed at the hands of abortionists.

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**NOTE FROM***The Editor**Consider Hosting an A.P. Seminar*

For many years, the professional speaking staff at Apologetics Press have conducted live seminars across the country. Last year, A.P. speakers spoke in 117 cities, 24 states, and three foreign countries. This level of activity has remained constant for many years. This avenue of disseminating subject matter for which A.P. is widely known has been an important and effective means of promoting the cause of Christ. On site seminars provide spiritual enrichment for the members of those churches that host the seminar; they also provide an opportunity to impact guests from the community who are invited to attend.

A.P. speakers address a wide variety of subjects and topics. Much of the material pertains specifically to traditional “Christian evidences”—like the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, and the deity of Christ. We have also specialized in responding to the unscientific claims of evolution in light of the Genesis account of Creation. In

addition to these basic staples, however, our speakers address many other matters that are extremely relevant in today’s culture. These topics include

Islam, dinosaurs, atheism, attacks on biblical morality, the Creation model, what America’s Founders said about the critical role of Christianity in the country, the “end times,” change in church worship practices, and how we know the Bible has not been altered in transmission.

Allow me to urge our readers to consider hosting an A.P. seminar either at a local church building or in a neutral location in the community. Much good seed can be sown and many hearts transformed.

**Dave Miller**

**Dr. Dave Miller****Kyle Butt****Eric Lyons****Dr. Jeff Miller****Weekend Seminars**

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